Volume 3, Issue 15   Atari Online News, Etc.   April 13, 2001

A-ONE #0315   04/13/01

~ Napster Told To Comply ~ People Are Talking!   ~ DSL Squeezed!
~ AOL Privacy Ads Shaved ~ ACLU Targets Snooping! ~ Atari810Win Beta!
~ Schools Held Hostage!   ~ 'Clippy' A Pitchman! ~ New XaAES Released!

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    ~ New Hades Utilities!   ~ 'On The Prowl' Returns ~ ACSpro Available!

                    -* Armey Applies Privacy Brakes *-
                   -* U.S. Studies Future of the Internet *-
                  -* Atari Video Game Collectors Quiz Launched! *-




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->From the Editor's Keyboard               "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, the snow is finally gone - at least in my neck of the woods. Whatever
remains is likely a pile of sand-encrusted frozen something-or-other, in
some parking lot. It's Spring. The buds are starting to come out on the
trees. I have flowers breaking through to the surface in my gardens. The
grass is starting to turn green. I saw robins. I barbecued last weekend.
Life is getting better. <grin>

We're gearing up for some changes to our e-mail subscription process, as
mentioned in last week's issue. We've been doing a lot of testing of a new
e-mail mailing system at our host web site, atarinews.org - thanks Rob, Joe,
and Scott! We hope to have it into place prior to Delphi shutting down its
e-mail system. We're also doing whatever it takes to minimize, if not
eliminate, any visible problems on the subscribers' end. Everything may
stay exactly the same except for the source of the mailing. I've received a
lot of feedback from our readers, and its been positive. The one fear that
has come up more than once was that we might be changing the format of the
magazine. That's not happening, nor were we considering it. The magazine
will remain a text file - no HTML or PDF version will be designed for
mailing to our subscribers. There is an HTML version available, for those
who choose to read A-ONE online. That's it. We will be testing the mailer
with our subscribers soon to make sure we've got any bugs resolved before
going live. We're also implementing an online subscription process for
people to subscribe, unsubscribe, change e-mail addresses, etc. We'll make
that information available in the next couple of weeks. So, that's exciting
news, at least from our perspective. There won't be any interruption of
subscriptions!

Lots of other interesting news happening this week. Napster has finally
been told to comply with the court order to filter out songs on their site,
or face being shut down. Well, you knew it had to happen. I'm surprised it
took this long. The FCC is trying to force schools and libraries to use
stricter filtering systems, or be faced with the loss of federal funding if
thy're currently getting it. Can anyone say, blackmail?! We'll see how far
the government gets with that! You'll find a lot of interesting articles
this week, so I'll leave it at that.

Happy Passover and Easter to those who observe (and a happy Patriots Day to
those of you in Massachusetts!).

Until next time...

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Atari810Win Beta (disk drive emulator)

Just wanted to let the interested atari fans to know that I have just
posted this first beta release of Atari810Win available at the moment only
for Windows NT 4.0 & 2000. The program is similar in functionality to the
excellent SIO2PC program by Nick Kennedy, and requires the use of an SIO2PC
cable to emulate an Atari 8-bit disk drive using disk images files on your
NT box. Enjoy! Please let me know about any thanks, bugs, problems, or
wish-lists you have. The source code is forthcoming and will be released
soon under the GNU GPL license.

get it at:

"http://www.bitsofthepast.com/atari

 -Dan Vernon

P.S. I have made an attempt to make my site more Netscape-friendly (at
least for version 4.77), please advise as to my success in this endeavor.

New Version of Hades Utilities

New utilities and docs for the Hades can be found at

http://www.kingx.com/kingx/medusa/program/Hadessh.zip

Includes a new Hades_b6.acc.

It's all in German though so get your dictionaries out.

ACSpro Available Via Europe Shareware

Hi all,

ACSpro (http://acspro.atari.org) stands for "Application Construction Set
professional".

It's a, visual, user-friendly, application construction set, coming from
Germany (English version is available). It works on all Atari systems,
including clones and emulators. Supported languages are GCC, Pure C, Lattice C,

Turbo C and Pure Pascal. Lots of examples are supplied as well as libraries for

Pure C and Pure Pascal.

It's now possible to register your copy via Europe Shareware (
http://www.europe-shareware.org).

Bye,

P. Ricard (ES)
--
Europe Shareware http://www.europe-shareware.org

                    Marijuana Mail 0.1.53 Released

New version is only available via ftp here

ftp://profit.pl/pub/atari/internet/marijuana/mjm-0153.zip

Several bug fixes are in place.

Screenshots of older versions are available at http://marijuana.atari.org

                         XaAES v0.906 Released

A new version of XaAES, the GEM replacement for MiNT.

This one will be much better than the previous.
Although I slowed down a little bit, I have not been sitting still.

Done:

1 Many invisible improvements of the internals. Read about them in the
history file.
2 XaAES reads its name from u:proc.
3 The file selector now uses Dxreaddir.
4 Fixes in shell_envrn. (For Ulrich :-).
5 Implementation of ARGV. This might not be complete. The documentation is a
little bit vague. Also there seem to be differences between the various
existing AES's.
6 Completely private memory allocation system. Thread save, well defined
open architecture, ample debugging capabilities, leak detection. Fixed a
few memory leaks. :-)
7 Removed abuse of the te_tmplen field for cursor positioning. The field
is now left alone. A big improvement of the internal flexibility of the
drawing procedure calling protocol made this possible.
8 Many improvements in dialogue handling.
9 Form_button didn't do very much in v0.7b. Finished form_button.
10 Client pool is now completely dynamic. lifted the 32 restriction.
The maximum is now only determined by the Fselect implementation. 11
Implemented OUTLINED, including special treatment in 3D and windowed
dialogues for the root object.
12 New config keyword 'windowner'. You can have no, the standard, or the
'nice' name of the window owner in every window's title.
13 Click on the desktop background brings the desktop owner in front.
14 Implementation of 'fall through' for mouse rectangle events. This lets
Thing go on after finishing some dialogues without having to move the
mouse.
15 More fixes in the menu swapping.
16 Separate config file for XAAESDBG.TOS : XAAESDBG.CNF
Cleaned out XAAES.CNF

This illustrates the fact that there is actually not much in there.

For explanations you can read the debug version.

Still untouched: MP, mouse and keyboard input.
As long as I can kill bugs on the AES side, the latter go first.

Don't hesitate to react!
If it is positive, it will keep me going on.
If it is negative, I'll have a strong reason to go on. ;-)

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Groeten; Regards.
Henk Robbers. mailto:h.robbers@chello.nl
http://members.ams.chello.nl/h.robbers/Home.html
A free multitasking GEM for MiNT: XaAES (heavily under construction);
Interactive disassembler: TT-Digger; Experimental text editor: AHCX

              GEMtidy 0.67 Released

A new update to GEMtidy is available at http://gemtidy.free.fr
This version contains patches to the File Selector routines

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                   PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                 compiled by Joe Mirando
                  jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's been another hectic week, and as
the year wears on I've come to believe that I'm not going to see much
of a slow-down any time soon.

On a happy note, my youngest sister gave birth to her first child this
week. Both mother and child are happy and healthy. Welcome to the
family, Ashley Elizabeth Pulvermacher! You have been born into
interesting times. Whether this is a blessing or a curse remains to be
seen.

As if there isn't already enough going on in my life, I've decided to
indulge myself in one of my longtime interests: Astronomy.

I've always wanted a BIG telescope, but I've never been able to afford
one of those fancy big-aperture scopes. I've got one or two small
ones... ones that allow you to view the moon and some of the planets,
but gather too little light to be really impressive.

Big scopes (with 16" or so mirrors) remained prohibitively expensive.
Then, on an off chance, I was flipping through channels one day and saw
a familiar face... That of John Dobson. He's something of a guru to
Amateur Telescope makers. I watched with awe as he hand-ground a round
piece of glass into a concave surface for a mirror... and then built a
telescope around it!

I eagerly gathered all the information I could about grinding my own
mirror. Finally, I found a good price on the glass disk and grinding
and polishing supplies. Now I'm just about ready to begin, and I'm
looking forward to actually building a telescope and taking that first,
all-or-nothing look at a celestial object. For those of you who have
never gone star gazing, the first look through a new telescope at Mars,
Jupiter, or Saturn is an almost spiritual experience. My first look at
Jupiter, the king of the planets, was many, many years ago. But I still
remember the sense of wonder and awe that I felt.

And if I only ever look through this telescope once and then never use
it again, I'll still have the memories of actually making it. It's kind
of like the old saying "The journey is as important as the destination".

It's really true.... sometimes you get a 'two-fer'. <grin>

Now let's get to the news and STuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
===================================

John Garone asks about download speed:

"What's considered a good FTP download speed (cps) for a stock Falcon
@ 57,600 and 115,000, Sting or Stik2?"

Roger Cain tells John:

"Assuming you are able to get a decent DCE connection (say 42000 to
48000) you should be able to achieve 4.0K to 4.2K cps.

But ... the net being what it is ..... much will depend on the loading
of your ISP and the target ftp site."

John tells Roger:

"So it should be around the same speed as CAB would download at!
Just a note here that at the time of my posting this question I had
confused cps (characters per second) with bps (bits per second) so I
thought I had a severe problem! I made the same mistake looking at CAB's
download rate. It also prompted my post on modem efficiency!!!"

Roger adds:

"Yes, they will both be using the phone line at around the same speed.
When it comes to looking at reported transfer rates you have to be
quite careful, though.

A file transmitted by ftp will usually be compressed. There is little
opportunity for further in-flight compression by the transmitting
modem. For this reason statistics derived from ftp transfers are
usually the most reliable indication of "real" line speed.

Many files which come via the http route will be uncompressed at source
(graphics, text etc.) and will be compressed by the transmitting modem.
These are then uncompressed by the modem at you end which means that you
will often see quite ENORMOUS transfer rates reported by CAB. e.g. many

megabytes of source "0"s would be in-flight compressed to a few bytes which would then be uncompressed to the original string when received. So ... for the actual line transmission of a few chars you will receive many megabytes which will grossly distort any reported statistics if you associate them with line-speed.

It is the ftp speed which you should work on if you are trying to optimise network efficiency - reported "speeds" for http will confuse!"

David Bolt adds this bit of info:

"Demon have provided a few test files on their FTP server to allow people to check their download speeds. There are 3 different types of file: an empty file, that consists of nothing but 0x00; a regular file that consists of
"ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789!"$%^&*()_=+[]{}#"
repeated for the length of the file; and a full file which contains (pseudo)random byte values from 0x00 to 0xff. The files are located in <URL:ftp://ftp.demon.co.uk/pub/test/>

As a comparison, with a modem connect speed of 48000bps and serial port set to 115200bps I fetched 'regularfile' (102400 bytes) at 10.03 KB/s, 'emptyfile4' (409600 bytes) at 10.37 KB/s and 'fullfile4' (409600 bytes) at 4.91 KB/s."

Mike Freeman asks for help with a problem he's having with MagiC and CAB:

"I have an odd problem that's come up recently, and I'm not sure what I've changed, as it never happened before. When I look at some pages, especially large ones (atari.org is one of them), CAB won't display the whole page. Only the last 10-20% or so. I can go to a different page, and hit the "Back" button, and *sometimes* it displays more of the page, sometimes the whole page, sometimes just as much as last time. This is only using Magic 6.01. If I use Geneva or any other OS, everything seems to work fine. One thought was that perhaps it's a bad HSMODEM setting (as I use HSMODEM on Magic and Fast Serial on Geneva), but as it does in fact load in the whole file, which can be viewed as a whole in a text editor, I don't think that's it. Anyone else run into this problem? It happens with all versions of CAB I've tried. I've tried deleting and re-installing things, including the cache, and moving things around in different locations on my hard drive, but it's always the same. No other software is affected. Only CAB."

Pascal Ricard tells Mike:

"I noticed the same behaviour sometimes too. The whole page is there but the slider is missing. If I just resize the page a little bit (with the sizer widget), the page is redrawn with the slider.

I do not recall if the same occurred with Magic 5.13 or not. In the case it's just with 5.20 and the later, maybe it have something to do with windframes. Another thing coming in mind is the size of the slider defined in Cab."

Mike tells Pascal:

"That's not quite the same problem I'm having. Mine isn't just displaying the top part and not letting me "slide" down to the rest.

It's cutting out most of the top portion. It'll display some partial raw HTML code, then display the bottom 10-20% correctly. If the part it will display is bigger than the window, it will indeed display a slider, but still won't correctly format and display the top 80-90%."

Peter West tells Mike:

"I think you need to establish first whether this is a comms problem or a CAB display one. Take a look at the source code - either in a text editor or by using the 'Source' button in CAB. If it's all there then there is something interfering with the full display, but it won't have anything to do with HSDMODEM. If only part of the file is there, then further tests are needed. I suspect it *is* all there but CAB isn't displaying it. Perhaps it is having problems with one of the graphics. Try switching these off temporarily ('Don't show', 'Text instead of images' in Display Options) and see if you get all of the text. Use the cache tool and see if you can display the document from the cache. Also try removing all AUTO folder and ACCs and reinstating them one by one to see if they are the cause - something may be clashing. Or could you be out of memory? Some info about your setup might help diagnosis."

Mike tells Peter:

"According to this definition, it's definitely a display problem, as the whole HTML file is viewable in a text editor.

I don't know if this helps, but if I go to the page that won't display right, then go to another page, then go "Back", it sometimes will display the whole page. Just never on the first try.

Would a crash like this [the one you mentioned] only exist in Magic and no other OS? I have just about identical setups with both Magic and Geneva (in fact, I have a lot more ACC's, CPX's, and AUTO's than in Magic). But Geneva won't present this problem.

My setup is this:

    Falcon with Nemesis, usually running at 20MHz.
    14Mb RAM
    2.3Gb HD divided in 4 partitions. The one I'm using for the Cache has over 250Mb available.

I haven't had any memory problems running CAB, Newsie, aICQ, and aMail all at the same time, so Memory shouldn't be a problem when just running CAB.

If it helps, this problem began presenting itself after re-installing Magic.

I've tried to re-reinstall it, and it hasn't changed the problem. I'm beginning to think more and more that it's a Magic related issue. Any ideas for what I can change in Magic that would help?"

Derryck Croker adds a tip for Mike:

"It might be worth your while trying a couple of different CAB overlays BTW."

Djorkje Vukovic asks for help configuring STiK2:

"I have used STing for quite some time (currently STing V1.26), and I decided to try STik 2 for a while. I found that it worked reliably, as well as STing did (and in one important detail better than STing) but I have some unresolved questions about configuring it on my machine - a MegaST with TOS 2.06:

* Recommended value for receive window is 4500. However, with the same segment size (MSS=1500) in STing, receive window recommended by R.Andersson was about 20000 (with some increase in allocated memory). Any suggestions?

* When STik 2 is used with recommended SLICE=1 or so, a small but noticeable slowdown of the computer can be observed (about 10%; I noticed this when testing some math-intensive routines). This happens all the time the computer is running with STik, not just online. A slowdown exists with STing too, but it is no so pronounced. Only if I select SLICE=10 and YIELD=1 the overall computer speed with STik is similar to that with STinG. Setting YIELD=0 slows the computer even more. Any suggestions for setting SLICE on a MC68000 Atari? Docs say SLICE=0 is fine for MC68030 and should be higher for lesser systems- but how high? Would SLICE=10 have any adverse effect on STik's performance online?

* As far as I know, STik 2 is to be effectively used mostly (only?) with a dial-up connection contrary to STing which can be used in diverse manners. So is there a way to automatically disable STik when it is not online?

This is related to my previous question about slowdown. What is the use of STik running without a connection? STing has a CPX in which it can be set "inactive" - although manually only. An automatic switch option should be possible, shouldn't it?"

Dan Ackerman tells Djordje:

"If you are using PPP you can skip that entry entirely. If using SLIP then you should use it and with STiK2 having too large or a receive window can reduce your connection efficiency. I did a lot of experimenting with that.

You can change the SLICE value dynamically from the tools section of Qdialer. There will be a speed where you will be happiest with your setup. Set it there. Sorry that is so vague of an answer. A value of 10 on my TT did make for a noticeable slow down of transfer rates. However this was a small reduction in the rage of 2-5% maybe. Possibly even lower than that. However I was able to notice that when I took it back down after using it at that rate for a few days that transfers were overall slightly faster.

For a 68000 you run into the opposite problem. If you put the slice too low then you will see an overall system slowdown, which in turn can adversely affect your transfer rates.

There is no way to set STiK2 to off. If it is running it is running. However if there is no connected port the overhead it performs is greatly reduced.   I would guess that from what you are saying that a SLICE of 10 or even possibly higher would be good for you. If you don't do any programming etc that would use the TCPIP stack except when online you could try the following.

In DEFAULT.CFG set SLICE = 200
Then in your dial script or in Qdialer Set Slice to 10

This should put stik fairly far on the back burner until you run
qdialer."

Well, that's it for this week folks. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Kirby Returns! X-Men!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   'Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3'!
                                    Atari Video Game Collectors Quiz Launched
                                    And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                 Sony PlayStation 2 Gets Hard Disk, Broadband Slot

Electronics giant Sony Corp said on Monday it will begin selling in Japan
next week an upgraded version of its PlayStation 2 game console that will
allow users to plug in a broadband-ready hard disk drive unit.

The new feature will allow the popular game console to link into the
Internet at several times the speed of current connections and also allow
for enriched game content that takes advantage of the extra memory that the
hard drive offers.

Sony Computer Entertainment Inc, the company's game-making subsidiary, has
already shipped more than 10 million PlayStation 2 machines since it was
launched in March last year. Its predecessor, which is still being sold
as the PS one, is the world's best-selling video game console.

The upgraded version is for the Japanese market -- PlayStation 2 game
consoles sold in North America and Europe since late 2000 already feature
the expansion bay slot.

Microsoft Corp is set to launch its rival Xbox video game console this
autumn which will feature an eight gigabyte hard drive, but gaming pioneer
Nintendo Co Ltd 's upcoming new Game Cube machine will not have a hard

drive.

Sony said the hard drive unit, which must be purchased separately, will allow users to download data and and programs, and allow for more interactive video games.

Sony has said it will boost monthly production of PlayStation 2 to two million units by this autumn and also reiterated its target of shipping 20 million units in the business year that began on April 1.

Shake, Rattle 'N' Roll -- Nintendo's Famous Kirby Returns!

Nintendo's Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble For Game Boy Color
Launches First-Ever Motion Sensor Game Pak
That Keeps Players Rockin' And Rollin'

Looking for a video game with a new twist? One that will keep you off balance ... and rock your world? Here it is: everyone's favorite pink puffball bouncing off the walls -- literally -- with the help of tilt-control technology in Nintendo's new Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble for Game Boy Color.

With the first-ever motion sensor game pak, Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble players can guide Kirby to tumble, tip and tilt his way through adventures by physically moving their Game Boy Color. Motion sensors inside the game pak detect physical movements, enabling them to enjoy a new type of innovative and dynamic game play. Players can snap Game Boy Color to make Kirby jump, shake Game Boy Color to power Kirby up, and tilt Game Boy Color to move Kirby forward, backward and side-to-side.

''Nintendo's success is based on the ability to identify new and exciting ways to enhance the game-play experience," says Peter Main, Nintendo's executive vice president, sales and marketing. ''Through the innovative motion-sensor technology in Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble, we're literally shaking things up on Game Boy Color."

Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble features ADXL202 motion sensors made by Analog Devices, Inc. The technology is based on the company's highly successful micromachined airbag crash sensors now used in new cars worldwide. The sensors enable new motion sensing features in toys, PDAs, cell phones, computers and for any application where gravity, shock and vibration are a factor. This is the first-ever application in a hand-held video game.

Players will go topsy-turvy with dozens of new levels in Dream Land, including mazes, puzzles and rockin' rollin' mini games. The game features hidden levels and pesky pests that stand in Kirby's way, as players must weave him through the adventure and collect stars stolen from Dream Land's night sky. Players must flip Kirby to clear chasms, battle baddies, soar the skies and send Kirby racing down rapids and tracks.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble ''E" for ''Everybody."

PRODUCT INFORMATION

    GAME TYPE:
    Action

PLAYERS:
One Player

   AVAILABLE:
   April 9

MSRP:
$34.95

   ESRB Rating:
   E

 * Nintendo's famous Kirby returns to the small screen in Kirby Tilt 'n'
   Tumble for Game Boy Color, the first-ever game pak for a hand-held
   interactive entertainment system that includes tilt-control
   technology.
 * The game uses Analog Devices' ADXL202 motion sensor micromachining
   technology to control Kirby by detecting players physical movements:
 * Micromachining is ground-breaking technology currently used in airbag
   sensors installed in most new cars worldwide
 * Control Kirby's on-screen actions by actually moving your Game Boy
   Color:
 * Snap Game Boy Color to make Kirby jump
 * Shake Game Boy Color to power Kirby up
 * Tilt Game Boy Color forward, backward and side-to-side to roll Kirby
   in all directions
 * Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble will be Game Boy Color exclusive. It is not be
   compatible with monochrome Game Boys.
 * Kirby first debuted in 1992's Kirby Dream Land(TM) for Game Boyfi and
   has now starred in a total of eight games, across a number of Nintendo
   platforms.

                    Marvel's Super Heroes Wield Justice With
                    Activision's Dynamic Lineup of Upcoming
                        Spider-Man and X-Men Games

The greatest super heroes of all time will wield their unique brands of
justice in Activision, Inc.'s upcoming lineup of Spider-Man and X-Men video
games. This highly anticipated slate of original titles and sequels
demonstrates Activision's commitment to bringing legendary comic book
characters to life with unparalleled realism.

Activision redefined the super hero category with the launches of Spider-
Man and X-Men: Mutant Academy for the PlayStation game console, Nintendo 64
and Game Boy Color platforms. Spider-Man debuted as the #2 best-selling
game by revenue for the PlayStation game console for the week of
September 3, 2000, according to NPD's TRSTS Data. The game went on to
top retail sales charts worldwide and finished calendar 2000 as the #10
PlayStation game console title and the #13 Nintendo 64 title by revenue.
Additionally, Spider-Man has been selected for inclusion in Sony Computer
Entertainment America's ''Greatest Hits" series, which features the best-
selling PlayStation game console titles ever. Coinciding with the opening
of Twentieth Century Fox's ''X-Men: The Movie," X-Men: Mutant Academy was
a top-10 title for both the PlayStation game console and Game Boy Color
platform by revenue for July and August 2000.

''The Spider-Man and X-Men video games have built on Marvel's 67-year history and expanded these renowned characters beyond traditional comic book fans, introducing them to an entirely new generation," states Ron Doornink, President and COO, Activision, Inc. ''The latest lineup of games offers new characters, storylines and features that will continue to further the brands' popularity."

Upcoming Spider-Man games include:

Spider-Man/Sega Dreamcast

Spider-Man is the first free roaming, 3D action-adventure game for Dreamcast featuring the most recognized super hero of all time. Players can employ all of Spider-Man's trademark skills, including web-slinging, wall-crawling agility and ''Spider-Sense." Players must utilize Spider-Man's super strength and superior wit to battle evil-doers and protect the innocent as they help solve a variety of puzzles and defeat old and new super villains alike. Spider-Man for Dreamcast is scheduled for release this spring.

Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six/Game Boy Color

Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six is the sequel to the action-adventure game, Spider-Man. Players are the swinging web hero, using all-new powers and attacks to thwart Doc Ock and his evil gang's plan to defeat Spider-Man. Other old favorites like Scorpion, Sandman, Mysterio and Vulture join forces with the evil Doc to test Spider-Man's strength, speed and smarts. Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six is scheduled for release this spring.

Spider-Man 2 Enter: Electro/PlayStation Game Console

The most recognized super hero of all time, Spider-Man will wield his own brand of justice in Activision's Spider-Man 2 Enter: Electro, the highly anticipated sequel to last year's blockbuster game. The 3D fast-paced action- adventure employs players to use Spider-Man's trademark skills as well as all- new moves, web attacks and fighting combos as they battle their way through all-new levels and training missions. Featuring enhanced fighting and combat sequences, the game challenges players to utilize Spidey's super strength and superior wit to battle evil-doers, solve a variety of puzzles and defeat a whole new lineup of notorious super villains. Spider-Man 2 Enter: Electro is scheduled for release this fall.

Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace/Game Boy Advance

For the first time ever, pocket gamers can live the fantasy of Spider-Man with the enhanced, side-scrolling gameplay and powerful graphics of the Nintendo Game Boy Advance. When Mysterio turns Manhattan into one big illusory nightmare, it is up to players to use Spider-Man's ''Spider-Sense" and amazing web-slinging, wall-crawling abilities to stop the evil plan and restore the city to normal. Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace is scheduled for release this fall.

Spider-Man/PC

For the first time ever, computer gamers can live the fantasy of Spider-Man in 3D with Spider-Man for the PC. Players can leap, crawl and swing anywhere in free-roaming, 3D environments while exploring both the tops of skyscrapers and the underbelly of Manhattan. In order to bring justice to a crime-ridden city, players must face off against Spidey's legendary gallery of super villains with a variety of attack combinations and a vast arsenal

of webbing including impact, trapping, web spikes and the web dome. The game also features cameo appearances by some of Spidey's greatest allies. Spider-Man for the PC is scheduled for release this fall.

Upcoming X-Men games include:

X-Men: Wolverine's Rage/Game Boy Color This all-new action-adventure game lets players fight as Marvel's legendary X-Man Wolverine in 20 levels of gut-wrenching excitement. Features include amazing attacks like ''Bestial Rage" which must be used wisely in conjunction with Wolverine's mutant healing in order to survive an onslaught of enemies. Players must also battle it out with such foes as Cyber, Sabretooth and Lady Deathstrike before an evil plan to liquefy Wolverine's adamantium skeleton is carried out. X-Men: Wolverine's Rage is scheduled for release this fall.

X-Men: Mutant Academy 2/PlayStation Game Console

The sequel to the action-packed favorite X-Men: Mutant Academy lets players take on the role of their favorite mutants. As one of 16 X-Men characters, gamers utilize their special powers as they train with Professor X. X-Men: Mutant Academy 2 features six new X-Men characters, all-new aerial combat, six new arenas, multiple new fighting combos and costumes, set sketches and conceptual character sketches from ''X-Men: The Movie." Each character has his or her own unique moves and combos. X-Men: Mutant Academy 2 is scheduled for release this fall.

X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse/Game Boy Advance

The X-Men enter the next dimension when they morph onto the Nintendo Game Boy Advance this fall. Featuring multi-player capabilities, X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse is an exciting new adventure featuring over 40 trademark X-Men characters. For the first time on Game Boy Advance, two different modes provide adventurous side-scrolling fun and fighting game action. In story mode, players must fight their way through hordes of enemies, drawing on their mutant powers as they attempt to find a way out of a strange, alternate universe. As players progress through the game, they are confronted with former friends and foes from their own universe -- all bent on stopping the X-Men from returning home. In versus mode, players can play head-to-head with up to four players. X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse is scheduled for release this fall.

Reality Hits Home With 'Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout' for Xbox

Crave's Revolutionary Extreme Fighting Sensation Set for Xbox Launch

Crave Entertainment announced details regarding ''Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout" for the Xbox video game system from Microsoft. The title, set to be released in the first wave of games for the system in Fall 2001, perfectly portrays the real-life mixed-martial arts pay-per-view spectacular, complete with stylized fighter entrances and signature submission moves.

'''Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout' is like no other fighting game ever created. Xbox has allowed us to detail the characters in such a way that every minute detail is displayed," said Holly Newman, Crave's executive vice president of Publishing, '''UFC: Tapout' has proven to be a tremendous franchise, changing the face of fighting games altogether by

mixing both standing and ground combat, combined with the most realistic gameplay and graphics ever created. Our first generation UFC games have already won numerous Best Fighting Game awards and we plan on continuing that success with Xbox. Crave will be represented in full force in the first wave of Xbox titles."

Packed with a full roster of the world's most accomplished athletes, including current UFC middleweight world champion Tito Ortiz, as well as classic brawlers, this title promises to offer gamers more full contact fighting than any other title ever created. With a variety of in depth gameplay modes, ''Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout" will take players through a grueling career mode as they work their way up through the ranking system. Would-be champions start out brawling against generic fighters in various tournaments as they work towards the ultimate bouts with UFC superstars. Even the cream of the crop will have to train diligently to get the championship title.

The presentation will be flawless; with music, sound, and visuals on par with actual UFC telecasts. Whether players are using a custom-made brawler or a real-life UFC athlete in the 8-player or 16-player tournaments, arcade, training, or versus modes, the hyper-realistic moves and athleticism will be jaw-dropping. Little differences will come to the forefront with the 'shader' technology of Xbox, as every bead of sweat, blood, bruising, and swelling will be displayed, only adding to perfectly captured renderings of the fighters, the event, and the overall aggressive feel of the sport.

''The first generation UFC title from Crave earned its place as a kick-ass modern fighting game," said J Allard, general manager, Xbox Platform. ''We're excited to be working with Crave on the next installment of UFC; the power of Xbox will bring fighting to an unparalleled level of realism, speed and intensity."

THQ Announces ''GT Advance Championship Racing"
for U.S. Launch of Game Boy Advance

THQ Inc. announced ''GT Advance Championship Racing" for release day and date with Nintendo's highly anticipated Game Boy Advance system.

''GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance has already gained critical acclaim in Japan as a realistic, fun and intense racer featuring authentic cars from top manufacturers. Developed by MTO Co. Ltd. in Japan, ''GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance is scheduled for launch June 11, 2001.

'''GT Advance Championship Racing' maximizes the capabilities of the Game Boy Advance hardware, making it one of the most realistic and exciting titles at launch," said Michael Rubinelli, vice president, product development, THQ. ''As a leader in the handheld category, we're thrilled to be able to start our next generation hand-held line-up with such a strong offering."

''GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance features more than 40 authentic cars with parts that can be upgraded from seven top car manufacturers including Honda, Mazda and Mitsubishi. As players progress, they can unlock cars with varying acceleration, top speeds and overall handling in order to master the 32 tracks. ''GT Advance Championship

Racing" also allows players to race head-to-head with friends using the Game Boy Advance link cable.

Activision's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 Set To Roll Onto Six Platforms

Activision announced that it will release the next installment of the best-selling skateboarding franchise of all time, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, on six platforms -- the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, Xbox video game system, Game Boy Advance, PC, PlayStation game console and Game Boy Color. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 will offer fast-paced skateboarding fun in a variety of massive living levels with new features enhancements.

''Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 takes skateboarding to the next level through its innovative technical advancements and unique gameplay features that offer fast and furious competitions both on the ramp and in the street," states Larry Goldberg, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ''The title's inherently fun and intuitive game design will translate seamlessly across multiple platforms."

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 delivers realistic, cutting edge graphics, action-packed gameplay, seamless video cinematic sequences and crisp special effects. The game extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional skateboarding genre by setting players in living environments that evolve. Players can choose to skate through realistic urban settings complete with pedestrians, cars, traffic accidents, natural disasters and changing weather conditions.

Players go high flying through some of the hottest skating locales in the world including Skater's Island in Middleton, Rhode Island, Rio, Los Angeles, Canada, Tokyo and Paris. Fluid animations let gamers pull off hundreds of combo moves and tricks including nollies, manuals and lip tricks using the franchise's signature solid control scheme.

Elevating the game's overall excitement, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 delivers a star-studded lineup of skateboarding pros that join Tony Hawk including new-to-the-roster Bam Margera of ''MTV Jackass" fame, and returning riders Steve Caballero, Rune Glifberg, Eric Koston, Bucky Lasek, Rodney Mullen, Chad Muska, Andrew Reynolds, Geoff Rowley, Elissa Steamer and Jamie Thomas. Additionally, fans can create their own skateboarding idols and personalize their skaters with glasses, hair, armbands and tattoos. The game's expanded multi-player modes increase re-playability for the ultimate in skateboarding fun.

THQ Announces "New Legends" for Xbox

THQ Inc. announced that the company is preparing its combat-driven, action-adventure game ''New Legends" to be among the first wave of titles for the Xbox video game system from Microsoft.

''New Legends" reaffirms THQ's commitment to publishing original and innovative software content for future-generation video game systems. The game will be available at retail alongside Xbox in fall 2001.

Currently in development by Infinite Machine Inc. in Berkeley, Calif.,

''New Legends" will transport Xbox owners to a futuristic China gripped in war. Technology and mysticism have blended to create a rich and dangerous world divided into the feudal lands of the ancient past as humans, demons and gods roam the territories.

As Sun Soo, the game's lead character, players will battle to free their homeland using a variety of weapons and fighting skills. ''New Legends" is the brainchild of Infinite Machine president and acclaimed game designer Justin Chin, creator of the critically praised and best selling PC title ''Jedi Knight."

''It is THQ's initiative to partner with the top development talent in the industry to build new and original game franchises," said Alison Locke, executive vice president, North American Publishing, THQ. ''We believe 'New Legends' will have a significant impact on Xbox and further demonstrates THQ's commitment to being a leader in technology and game development."

''Working with THQ has allowed us to focus the development cycle of 'New Legends' first and foremost on quality," Chin. '''New Legends' is an innovative and groundbreaking title that truly pushes the boundaries of interactive action, and we expect the game to fully showcase the power of Xbox."

In ''New Legends," the action is intense and the adventure is high as the game focuses on cinematic combat coupled with an engaging storyline. Players will approach battle with the style and skill of a master martial artist, with the ability to wield two weapons at once while performing dramatic attacks and a selection of specialized moves. Blades and bullets will clash, as players are able to choose from a variety of defensive, ranged and melee weapons.

''New Legends" is one of the most highly anticipated titles currently in development for Xbox, and editors at GamePro magazine say: ''This game's pedigree is topnotch." Gamespot comments: ''There is a lot of proprietary technology going into 'New Legends' to make it look amazing." Electronic Gaming Monthly asks its readers: ''What console launch would be complete without a strong action/adventure title to usher it in?"

THQ has also announced ''WWF Raw is War" for Xbox.

                    Activision Brings the First Family of Springfield
                        To the Mat in The Simpsons Wrestling

                    'The Simpsons' Take to the Ring in Their First
                         Title On the PlayStation Game Console

Fans of FOX Broadcasting's popular, animated television satire ''The Simpsons" can now grapple, pile drive and body slam their way across Springfield in The Simpsons Wrestling for the PlayStation game console. The game, produced by Fox Interactive and developed by Big Ape, is rated ''T" for Teen by the ESRB. The Simpsons Wrestling game is being published and distributed in North America by Activision, Inc. and is currently available at retail locations nationwide for a suggested retail price of $39.99.

The Simpsons Wrestling is an all-out, humorous 3D wrestling/fighting game featuring the much-loved characters and locations of ''The Simpsons." Players can take on the identity of their favorite character and battle

their way to the ultimate title -- Champion of Springfield. The show's voiceover talent brings further authenticity to the game by performing their characters' dialogue and comic wrestling taunts.

Featuring 22 characters from the television show, The Simpsons Wrestling lets players choose to wrestle as their favorites including Bart, Homer, Marge, Lisa, Burns, Smithers, Krusty, Apu, Moe, Flanders and more. Each character executes his or her own unique fighting style and ``special moves" such as Homer's ``Strangulator," Bart's ``Wedgie," Lisa's ``Pop Quiz," and Barney's ``Duff Cloud Burp." Players learn to utilize the numerous power-ups like the donut that increases speed, bowling pins that can be used as clubs and bubble gum that slows players down. The game also features 3D, graphically detailed Springfield locations such as the Simpson house, Krusty Lu Studios, Moe's Tavern, the Kwik-E-Mart, Barney's Bowl-O-Rama and the infamous Nuclear Power Plant. The Simpsons Wrestling was developed by Novato-based developer Big Ape.

                    Stuart Little Makes His Nintendo Video Game
                    System Debut Through an Exclusive Licensing
                     Deal Between Activision And Sony Pictures

E.B. White's loveable mouse, Stuart Little, will leap from the big screen and spring to life in a series of new animated interactive adventures on Nintendo video game systems through an exclusive agreement between Activision, Inc. and Sony Pictures Consumer Products, Inc.

Under the terms of the deal, Activision has acquired the worldwide rights to develop and publish interactive games for Nintendo's Game Boy Color and Game Boy Advance based on Columbia Pictures' blockbuster motion picture ``Stuart Little," as well as the exclusive option to develop and publish a NINTENDO GAMECUBE title based on the film. Additionally, Activision has obtained rights to develop Nintendo games based on the highly anticipated sequel, ``Stuart Little 2," which is slated for release in summer 2002.

``The 'Stuart Little' franchise will further complement Activision's slate of family entertainment games that includes such popular titles as Disney/Pixar's Toy Story 2, The Lion King: Simba's Mighty Adventure and Disney's Tarzan," states Greg Goldstein, vice president of licensing for Activision, Inc. ``Interactive games based on this phenomenally successful property will allow children and families to become completely immersed in a 'Stuart Little' world that brings the film's popular characters to life."

One of the top-100 feature films of all time, ``Stuart Little" grossed more than $300 million dollars in worldwide theatrical box office receipts. Based on the classic children's book, the film starred Geena Davis and Hugh Laurie and Jonathan Lipnicki and followed the zany adventures of Stuart, an orphaned mouse that is adopted by a kind couple, the Littles, as a brother for their youngest son George. A computer-generated character, Stuart was brought to life by the voice over talent of Michael J. Fox.

According to Michael Peikoff, Senior Vice President Marketing and Client Relations at Sony Pictures Consumer Products, ``We are genuinely excited to be partnering with Activision on the Stuart Little property. Stuart Little is considered an evergreen franchise for Sony Pictures Consumer Products and Activision's vibrant interactive games will delight and enchant children as well as their families around the world."

Bar Bouncers To The Rescue

Some fighting games claim to have a plot, yet simply offer obscure animated
interludes between battles. ''The Bouncer," Squaresoft's new $50 fighter
for the PlayStation 2, is an exception.

Certainly, there is lots of martial arts fighting to be done, and one
skirmish is usually only the prelude to the next. But in between, there's
actually a storyline that carries the game along to a coherent conclusion.
Admittedly, it's not much of a storyline, but it's no more vapid than what
you'll find in a lot of big-budget action movies.

The premise of ''The Bouncer" is simple enough. A group of seemingly
superhuman thugs, able to plummet from the sky without parachutes and leap
across tall buildings in a single bound, converge on a bar and kidnap a
beautiful woman. Her boyfriend, Sion, is one of three bouncers who live at
the bar.

A second bouncer, a big lug with implanted horns and pierced everything,
recognizes the goons as a security team from The Mikado Group, a local
high-tech company that is developing an orbiting solar-power generator and
a massive space shuttle. So Sion, the lug and the third bouncer, who didn't
know when to tell his tattoo artist to take a break, decide to rescue the
girl.

And so, the quest begins. First stop: the train station to catch the train
to Mikado's headquarters. Actually, that's not the first stop. The trio
must fight to get into the station, fight to get through the turnstiles,
fight to get on the train, fight once they get on the train . . . You get
the idea.

Before each battle, the game lets you decide which bouncer to control.
Playing as a different character at different stages leads to different
endings.

The system for controlling the fighters is straightforward, although
there's a complicated point system that allows players to juice up the
skills of their characters as the game progresses.

The standard technique for winning fights -- mashing as many buttons as
rapidly as possible on the control pad -- doesn't work well here. As in
real life, it takes a split second for a character to recover from a
move, so timing is important. For example, I found that battling some
industrial-strength robots became a breeze once I was able to pace my
shots; I could keep hitting the robot while preventing it from gearing
up for a counterattack.

However, the more times you play through the game, the tougher your
enemies become.

''The Bouncer" has plenty of colorful villains for the trio to defeat,
plus solo adventures when the group is forced to split up. There are
also some truly spectacular non-interactive sequences, such as the scene
when the Mikado group uses a fighter plane with amazing maneuverability
to disable the train, which is loaded with rocket fuel.

Unfortunately, there are times when ''The Bouncer" strays too far into pure fantasy. I can accept large floating platforms and security guards who leap faster and higher than oversized grasshoppers. But when the developers want me to accept a shape-shifting panther, that's a bit much, especially when the creature can also walk through walls.

I also have two other complaints. First, whenever you die, the game dumps you back to the title screen instead of automatically reloading your position from the last time you saved the game. Second, during the sequence where you're fighting to get the girl out of the complex, she behaves like a moron. Instead of always letting you stay between her and the bad guys, there are times when she gets in the way, gets hit, and dies.

It makes her seem very, very dumb in a game that, otherwise, is very, very smart.

''The Bouncer," which is rated for teens because of the animated violence, also has various battle modes that allow you to go head-to-head against the computer or a friend. However, you need to win in the story mode to unlock all the characters.

Hitting The Shelves

The new games listed here are rated E for everyone unless otherwise indicated.

PlayStation and GameBoy Color – ''Batman: Gotham City Racer" ($30) for the PlayStation features the square-jawed Batman from the animated series and lets players race the Batmobile, Batcycle and various villains' vehicles through Gotham City. UbiSoft Entertainment has also just released a new Batman title, ''Batman: Chaos in Gotham" ($30), for the GameBoy system.

PlayStation 2 – ''Heroes of Might and Magic: Quest for the Dragonbone Staff" ($50) brings the 3DO ''Heroes" series to the PS-2. In this game, players must race to retrieve an ancient artifact before a poison kills the King.

Nintendo 64 – ''Dr. Mario 64" ($30) is a puzzle game where players rotate falling ''megavitamin capsule" pieces and line up the colors to eliminate ''viruses."

Web Awaits Japanese PS2 Owners

Japanese PlayStation 2 owners now can swap e-mail and view Web pages via the game console.

Planetweb, a Redwood Shores, Calif.-based software maker specializing in applications for consumer electronics, announced Thursday the availability of Egbrowser, developed in conjunction with Japan's Ergosoft.

The software will work with PS2-compatible modems that connect through the console's USB (universal serial bus) port. Besides Web browsing and e-mail, the software supports MP3 music files and online features in development for current and upcoming PS2 games.

The software will come on a standard disc for PS2, will be sold either on its own or bundled with a USB modem, and will work with most Internet service accounts, said Ken Soohoo, CEO of Planetweb.

"It's just like any other software for the PS2: It runs off the disc and saves stuff like ISP settings on the memory card," he said.

The software will allow WebTV-style Web browsing and e-mail, Soohoo said, but the main function is to deliver online gaming content as it becomes available for the system.

"It's a totally different model from WebTV," he said. "Our main mission is to allow people to hook up and play games online."

Soohoo said development of a U.S. version of the software is up to Sony, which closely controls licensing of all PS2 products.

Online connections have emerged as one of the key arenas as Sony battles with Nintendo and with Microsoft's upcoming Xbox game console. The Xbox will ship with a built-in Ethernet port that will allow broadband Internet connections.

Microsoft announced an agreement last month with Japanese phone giant NTT Communications to provide online services for the Xbox. Nintendo's upcoming GameCube console will include support for broadband and dial-up Internet connections.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
  """""""""""""""""""""

              Win Your Own Treasure: Take The ANTIQUES ROADSHOW
                  Online "Appraise It Yourself" Challenge

              Atari Video Game Collectors Quiz Launched April 9

Wondering what to do between episodes of ANTIQUES ROADSHOW on PBS? ANTIQUES ROADSHOW Online is the place to get your fix of interactive, virtual antiquing--and win some treasures of your own. With a number of unique features that have made it one of PBS's most popular sites, ANTIQUES ROADSHOW Online is fun, informative, and easy to use for loyal fans and first-time visitors alike:

Get Ready to Win: First, get antiques-savvy reading "Tips of the Trade, a showcase for the wisdom of the appraisers, and "Antiques Speak," a glossary of technical terms. Now you're ready to match wits against a stumper in our "Appraise It Yourself" monthly quiz contest and win special ROADSHOW prizes. And for newcomers who just can't get enough, previous months' quizzes also are online.

Starting April 9, "Appraise It Yourself" launches a brand new contest with a vintage collectibles spin. Atari video games, once a happy addiction for

kids who grew up in the late 70s and early 80s, are now hot collectibles.
If you know which title is considered the "Holy Grail" of Atari games or
you can tell the difference between Chase the Chuckwagon and Chuck E.
Cheese, you could be a contender!

Here are a couple of sample questions and multiple-choice answers:

What is it that today's middle aged collectors are looking for in the Atari
games of their youth?

They work, are in good condition, and are rare. They include scantily clad
super-heroines.They still work on today's computers.

Current prices for Atari products are:

Pacman, $5-$10; Tooth Protectors, $100-$200; Quadrun, $500-$1,000 Packrat,
$5-$10; Tooth Decay, $100-$200; Quadriceps, $500-$1,000 Pacman, $100-$200;
Tooth Protectors, $500-$1,000; Quadrun, $5-$10

Take the plunge; dare to compare your instincts and smarts with the experts
at ANTIQUES ROADSHOW Online.

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW Online is the companion Web site to the PBS series, which
airs Mondays at 8pm ET on PBS (check local listings). ANTIQUES ROADSHOW
Online (www.pbs.org/antiques) is produced by WGBH Interactive Media,
Boston, which produces Web sites supporting WGBH national series such as
NOVA, American Experience, Arthur(TM), and This Old House(TM). WGBH
Interactive Media also produces WGBH ONLINE (www.wgbh.org), updated weekly
for WGBH viewers, members, and listeners throughout the Northeast. The WGBH
Educational Foundation is the single largest producer of prime-time
television programs and Web sites seen nationally on PBS and PBS ONLINE.

Major funding for ANTIQUES ROADSHOW is provided by the Chubb Group of
Insurance Companies. Additional funding is provided by First Union and
eBay.com. Funding for ANTIQUES ROADSHOW Online is provided by grants from
Chubb, First Union, and PBS.

PBS.org, PBS's award-winning site on the World Wide Web, produces
high-quality Web programming as it pioneers the convergence of television
and the Internet. PBS Online features more than 85,000 pages of content as
well as companion Web sites for more than 400 PBS programs and specials.
PBS ONLINE has won the prestigious Webby Award for best TV Web site in 1998
and 1999. In January 2000, Yahoo! put PBS.org at the top of its list of the
best Web sites of all time.

                         AtariNews: On The Prowl
                             April 2, 2001

ATARINEWS: ON THE PROWL IS BACK!

It's been over a year since the last issue of AtariNews: On The Prowl
was transmitted over the Internet. During that time, a lot has changed,
games have been released, others canceled. A lot of news was missed,
but there is still a lot to report on. AtariNews is back, watch your
email for it.

http://www.atariansun.com

JAGFEST 2K1

JagFest 2K1 is coming June 30, 2001 at the Pieper Power Center in
Milwaukee, WI. JagFest is the annual gathering of Atari Jaguar
fanatics, appearing in different areas around the country. Admission
for this year's JagFest will be $8.00 for pre-registers and $10.00 at
the door. AtariNews will keep you up to date as more information about
JagFest 2K1 is released.

http://jagfest.atari.org

PHILLYCLASSIC 2001

Named "The East Coast Classic Gamers Event," PhillyClassic 2001 will be
a massive showing of classic video games from Atari and other companies.
The show will take place at the Sheraton Suites Philadelphia Airport.
Admission is $7.50. The show will include console and arcade games in
free play, trading, vendors, tournaments, Door prizes, and an auction.
PhillyClassic takes place April 20 & 21, 2001

http://www.phillyclassic.com

CLASSIC GAMING EXPO 2001

Another Atari-related gaming show, Classic Gaming Expo, will be
happening August 11 & 12, 2001. CGE will be held at Jackie Gaughan's
Plaza Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Advance Registration before May
31 is $25, after that, it's $30. Tickets at the door are $35. This
years show includes Vendors, Exhibitors, Arcade and home console games,
Arcade Game Raffle, Tournaments, Keynote speeches and trading.
AtariNews will have more information as it becomes available.

http://www.cgexpo.com/

PORTABLE ATARI 2600 IN DEVELOPMENT

Benjamin J. Heckendorn is developing a portable Atari 2600, complete
with a screen. The VCSp uses components out of an real Atari 2600,
connected to a screen. It is held in a Game Boy style, and the screen
is full color, and backlit. The final cost of the VCSp will be between
$200 and $300. There also may be two different models. For pictures
and more information, visit the VCS Portables home page.

http://www.classicgaming.com/vcsp/index.htm

PROTECTOR: SPECIAL EDITION

Songbird Productions is currently developing Protector: Special Edition.
The game is planned to be released in the fall of 2001, and it could
possibly include an exclusive JagFest 2001 group picture, CD bypass to
enable new, unencrypted Jaguar CD software, new waves, new enemies, new
landscapes, gameplay enhancements, and more! Protector: Special
Edition may even be on a 4MB Cart. Songbird is also looking for help

from the Jaguar fans with new graphics and music files. The Special
Edition is still in early development, AtariNews will keep you
up-to-date as it progresses.

http://songbird.atari.net/protector_se.shtml

Send any comments or submissions for "AtariNews: On The Prowl" to:
Brian Gudzevich (Editor) at: atarinews@atariansun.com

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                    A-ONE's Headline News
               The Latest in Computer Technology News
                   Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                 Judge Threatens To Shut Napster Down

Calling Napster's less-than-successful efforts to block copyrighted material
"disgraceful," the judge in the Napster case threatened on Tuesday to shut
down the popular renegade Internet music site, according to media reports.

If Napster is unable to find a way to comply with the order to block the
copyrighted songs, "maybe the system needs to be shut down," Judge Marilyn
Hall Patel told the parties that packed the San Francisco, California
courtroom, according to published reports.

A court-ordered shutdown would spell disaster for Napster, industry experts
say.

"That would be very bad for the company's developing business model, which
depends on keeping people coming back to get Napster music, because their
eventual goal is to transition all of their customer base to be paying
customers," Webnoize analyst Ric Dube, who covers the digital
entertainment industry, told NewsFactor Network.

"If there were a court ordered shutdown, and some months from now there
was a re-launch of a paid service, then they're going to have to beg
everybody to come back," Dube added.

Though Judge Patel had harsh words for Napster, she stopped short of giving
the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) a clear victory.

Patel declined to modify the injunction that orders Napster to block access
to the copyrighted songs and requires the record companies to help in the
process.

Instead, Patel said, she'll wait until court-appointed mediator A.J. Nichols
meets with technology experts on both sides of the dispute to discuss the
failed filtering system and other technical issues in the case.

Nichols has been studying the case for several weeks, although he was
officially named the mediator only on Tuesday, media reports said. Nichols,

who is also the founder of technology company Probitas Corp., has been assigned to advise Patel on technical issues in the Napster case.

The RIAA maintains that of the 5,000 songs it has asked Napster to block, more than 80 percent are still available on Napster's file-sharing system.

Napster said only last week that it had filtered more than 300,000 artist/song title pairs, and blocked 1.7 million file names from its users. The company claims that the number of files shared per user has dropped by 50 percent.

"Today's hearing reflects Judge Patel's determination to ensure that the Court's injunction is obeyed and that Napster's infringing conduct comes to an end," an RIAA spokesman said in a statement.

Patel also declined to resolve the issue of whether a request by a number of musicians and record companies for class-action status will be granted.

The legal battle is not sapping all of Napster's attention, though. On Tuesday the California-based company announced that it has acquired portions of Gigabeat, a music search and indexing company.

The acquisition comes at a time when Napster is awaiting the arrival of a new class of online competitors. Some of the biggest names on the Internet, and in music, have announced plans to offer subscription-based download services, including ventures backed by Microsoft, AOL and Sony.

If there is a court-ordered shuttering of the Napster site because of copyright issues, "Napster loses its advantage once it and the other competitors launch paid music services," Dube told NewsFactor.

Armey Applies Privacy Brakes

The man who decides which bills will be considered on the House floor said Monday that any online-privacy bill is likely to do more harm than good.

In a letter to his House colleagues, Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said Congress must avoid "silver-bullet solutions that will quickly become obsolete or leave ourselves vulnerable to criticism that the government is not meeting the standards it requires from others."

"I don't want strangers poking around in my business any more than they want me poking around in theirs," he wrote. But "a legislative or regulatory solution may be the slowest and least effective way to address consumer concerns."

Armey's letter comes mere months after House and Senate leaders of both parties vowed to draft and pass an online-privacy bill this year. But over those months, momentum for such a bill seems to have faded even as Congress has begun to hold nearly weekly hearings on the subject. Trade organizations that historically had supported self-regulation and found themselves accepting the inevitability of legislation were among the first to notice the slowdown, resulting partly because there are almost as many potential legislative solutions to online privacy as there are members of Congress.

"It's very tricky to legislate in this area," said H. Robert Wientzen,

president of the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). Although he said DMA could support targeted bills on topics such as medical privacy, he doubted "any omnibus legislation could make sense."

Online-privacy advocates weren't prepared to give up the fight just because of Armey's opposition, however.

"We have an uphill battle," admitted Ed Mierzwinski, consumer program director for the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and a member of the Privacy Coalition. "But all this shows is that the (corporate) agenda has been adopted by the House leadership, which we already knew."

Armey said he wasn't advocating that government do nothing about online privacy, only that it focus on ensuring that its own Web sites are secure first. He cited a recent study by the General Accounting Office that found 97 percent of all federal Web sites failed "to meet the very (privacy) standards (the Federal Trade Commission) had asked Congress to impose on everyone else."

"Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones," Armey wrote. "And right now, the federal government's online house is made of pretty thin glass."

"He's trying to deflect the issue" with a focus on government sites, Mierzwinski said. "The government and the private sector are both invading our privacy...We need to deal with both."

Armey's argument echoed that of the DMA's Wientzen, who said that although some Web sites are not adhering to the self-regulatory policies promoted by Truste and others, the private sector "has had a much bigger success (advancing privacy) than the government's been able to do."

Mierzwinski held out hope that a comprehensive privacy bill could be passed in 2001. "I think we still could do it," he said, "but it will be hard."

The first privacy-related bill likely to fall under Armey's consideration for a floor vote is an antispam bill by Reps. Heather Wilson, R-N.M., and Gene Green, D-Texas. The bill has already cleared the House Commerce Committee and awaits action in the Judiciary Committee.

Last year Armey allowed a similar bill to go to the House floor, and it passed with a 427-1 vote. This year might be different, however, as Wilson has added language allowing Internet service providers to set their own spam policies even if contrary to federal law.

The DMA continues to oppose the Wilson-Green bill, even though Wilson says she has made several modifications in an attempt to appease the group.

"We don't want to create an environment where ISPs have absolute control over what is acceptable and what is not acceptable," Wientzen said.

ACLU Targets 'Massive' Governmental Cyber-Snooping

Alleging that the governments of the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand are members of a worldwide, mass-monitoring electronic spy network, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has

launched a major publicity campaign against government cyber-snooping.

An ACLU ad scheduled for the April 15th issue of The New Yorker magazine and the April 16th issue of the New York Times Magazine features a mobile phone with the caption: "Now equipped with 3-way calling. You, whoever you're dialing, and the government."

"Through surveillance programs with ominous names like 'Echelon' and 'Carnivore,' government agencies are violating the Fourth Amendment [of the U.S. Constitution], which was adopted for the express purpose of protecting Americans from unwarranted government surveillance," says a statement on the rights group's Web site.

Among the ACLU's primary concerns is the Echelon program, a closely-guarded satellite signal interception system. According to ACLU associate director Barry Steinhardt, Echelon's primary purpose is "worldwide surveillance, not just of other intelligence agencies, but of civilians."

Calling Echelon "mammoth," Steinhardt told NewsFactor Network that the nations mentioned in the campaign have participated in the development and deployment of the "worldwide communication interception program."

"Echelon is this vacuum cleaner," Steinhardt said. "The government possesses and uses technologies that allow for the widespread interception of electronic communication. There are already concerns that it is used too far and for political purposes."

Steinhardt said there is no way to analyze the extent of government intrusion because there are no privacy standards or laws that address electronic communications such as e-mail.

"The laws that purport to govern [privacy] really predate the technologies," he told NewsFactor. "We need to re-examine the laws, re-examine the degree of government oversight, and we need to be aware that the government possesses these capabilities."

Steinhardt added that with Echelon and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) electronic eavesdropping software, widely known as Carnivore, the technological ability to intercept, filter and analyze private information in electronic form is well-established.

"They admit they have and use the technology," Steinhardt said. "Now we need to know how much, to what degree are they using it, and who's policing them. Who's watching the watchman?"

A security official who requested anonymity told NewsFactor that most U.S. experts who know about Echelon and signal interception technologies have connections with national defense or security organizations, and are advised not to discuss the programs.

However, a committee established last July by the European Union to investigate Echelon is still working.

While privacy advocates such as the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) have lobbied legislators, claiming that many of the proposed laws before Congress are too weak, Steinhardt doubts that Congress will pass any law at all.

"Congress hasn't passed anything," he told NewsFactor. "It doesn't look like they're going to pass anything."

Steinhardt said that U.S. House majority leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) is "half right" in his concern over government intrusion and caution in legislation. Armey has warned that ill-considered legislation dealing with privacy issues could produce unintended consequences.

"He is right that government does pose a threat to our privacy," Steinhardt said. "On the other hand, private industry also poses a threat to privacy. We have to move beyond sectoral protection of privacy rights."

AOL Agrees to Scale Back Ad Claims on Privacy

Leading Internet service America Online said Thursday that it has agreed to modify its advertising to clarify that it cannot vouch for its customers' privacy when they venture out onto the Web.

The Better Business Bureau's advertising division had asked the Internet's largest service provider to change language in a television ad that said the service provided strong privacy and security protections to its 28 million customers.

''At America Online, your security and privacy are always protected," the ad said.

The independent oversight group was concerned that new users might think the privacy protections applied to the Internet as a whole.

The bureau's National Advertising Division said in a statement that America Online offers an ''extremely high" level of privacy protection in its members-only areas and on affiliate Web sites, such as CNN.com and Barnesandnoble.com, but has no control over how independent sites collect and handle customer data.

''We agree that it is important for consumers to understand the difference between the strong privacy and security protections that AOL offers its members on the service as opposed to the Internet at large, which may not always offer the same protections," the company said in a release.

U.S. Ties Web Filters to Cash for Schools, Libraries

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruled Thursday that public schools receiving federal funds to pay for computers and Internet services must comply with a law requiring Web content filters by July of next year in order to receive the money.

The FCC says schools that fail to show they are complying with the filter mandate -- part of the U.S. Congress-approved Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) -- by October of this year, or are not in compliance by July 2002, risk losing federal funding.

The FCC ruling is unfair, according to the American Library Association (ALA), which last month joined a number of groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, in a lawsuit to strike down CIPA.

The ALA called the FCC ruling and the compliance time frame both
financially and technically burdensome for schools and libraries.

The association also claimed that the law is redundant, as libraries
already implement policies to protect children and other users from
offensive material over the Web.

"We are profoundly disappointed," executive director of ALA's Washington
D.C. office Emily Sheketoff told NewsFactor Network. "Now to tell
libraries you have to go back and change your plan, that's really quite
unfair. We're talking about long-term plans."

The association's president has said CIPA forces libraries to choose
between funding and censorship and will have a negative impact
particularly on schools "in the most poverty-stricken and geographically
isolated areas of the country."

"The federal government should not be subsidizing commercial filtering
companies by forcing libraries to buy technology that doesn't work," said
a statement from ALA president Nancy Kranich.

A U.S. District Court that has already struck down two similar laws on
Internet content will consider the CIPA lawsuit, although it is unclear
when. ALA's Larra Clark told NewsFactor that the association is seeking a
preliminary injunction and a court schedule before the FCC's October
deadline.

The ALA also says filters do not work, pointing to research such as a
Consumer Reports study done last February that showed filter software lets
some objectionable material through while blocking legitimate Web sites
and content.

Kranich argues that librarians are best suited to oversee Internet
activity in schools and libraries.

"Who would you trust more to guide children to quality materials, your
librarian, or an employee of a dot-com filtering company?" Kranich asked
in her statement.

However, there has been broad support of the FCC ruling from filtering
software producers and filter advocates.

A representative of filtering software-maker N2H2, which criticized the
Consumer Reports study as too small and irrelevant to school libraries,
told NewsFactor that schools have plenty of time to comply with the
ruling.

"I don't think it puts them in a tight spot at all," said N2H2 marketing
research manager David Burt.

"October 28th represents the start of the next school year. That's a very
fair timeline. The FCC was charged with interpreting the will of Congress
and trying to make the rules less burdensome as possible. I think they did
a good job of accomplishing those two things."

Burt, whose company provides filtering software to 17,000 schools, added
that most of the filtering software available allows authorized users such
as librarians or teachers to override a filter if they feel something is
filtered unnecessarily.

The FCC ruling also drew praise from the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), which said the commission did a good job of balancing local and federal control of filtering.

"The FCC wisely avoided proscriptive approaches that would have placed the commission squarely in the role of determining content management for schools and libraries," said ITAA president Harris N. Miller.

"Burdensome regulations from Washington are not needed by software filter buyers or sellers."

U.S. Studies Future of the Internet

Close on the heels of a hotly disputed agreement between the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and VeriSign, governing the distribution of top level domain names (TLDs), the U.S. government has begun a study of Internet search and domain name issues that was ordered more than two years ago.

The Committee on Internet Searching and Domain Name Systems held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. on Monday to hash out the details of its objectives. The meeting continued Tuesday in a closed session.

"A lot of things have happened since [Congress] first authorized the committee," committee chairman Roger Levien told NewsFactor Network, noting that ICANN wasn't even incorporated when the law creating the committee was passed.

"We've tried to get to the underlying concerns that motivated it and to have a discussion of the future of the Internet," Levien said. "The central question is how are we going to find our way around the Internet three, five or seven years from now."

The committee is run by the National Research Council and funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Science Foundation, under a 1998 law passed by Congress.

Representatives of ICANN, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, patent and copyright attorneys, and academics specializing in Internet domain name issues gave their recommendations to the committee on Monday.

The committee's work is likely to attract significant attention as issues in the assignment and managing of TLD names remain hot.

Last week, ICANN changed its tack somewhat when it approved a revised agreement with VeriSign, the company that currently controls the master list of domain name registrations for the dot-com, dot-net and dot-org TLDs.

The new agreement calls for VeriSign to retain its registry monopoly on dot-com names until 2007, but requires VeriSign to put the dot-org registry out for bid in 2002 and do the same with dot-net in 2006.

"This is not an 'evaluate ICANN' committee," Alan Inouye, the National Resource Council staffer responsible for the project, told NewsFactor. "But obviously we have to understand how ICANN is working, and what kind of governance might be needed in the future."

The committee plans to focus first on technology issues and then on how the Internet might look several years from now, committee chairman Levien told NewsFactor.

And, while this week's panel was heavy with policy analysts but few technology experts, the next one will be in the San Francisco, California area and will include more tech heavyweights, Levien said.

"We're going to try to understand what these new kinds of technologies might be, call attention to them, and look at creating an institutional environment that might enable them to work," he said.

The committee will not issue a report until the summer of 2002, but expects to hold meetings around the country to hear comments and recommendations on various components of its research.

The Approaching Internet Domain Name Revolt

A quiet revolt is gathering steam below the surface of the Internet as companies demonstrate increasing determination to wrest control of the Internet domain naming system from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

At the moment, ICANN selects which top level domain (TLD) names, such as dot-com and dot-org, will be officially sanctioned and, therefore, reachable through any Internet browser or Internet service provider (ISP). But a universe of alternative TLDs fronted by companies that violently disagree with ICANN's policies are waiting in the wings.

In order for most users to access these alternative TLDs at the moment, they must either download a software plug-in or change their browser settings.

The most serious challenge to ICANN so far comes from Pasadena, California-based New.net, which is offering Web site builders the option of choosing from 20 alternative TLDs rather than the ubiquitous dot-com, dot-org and dot-net. For US$25, New.net will sell anyone the rights to a Web address with TLDs like dot-shop, dot-family, dot-kids or dot-mp3.

"ICANN's taken forever to do things," Steve Chadima, chief marketing officer at New.net, told NewsFactor Network. "They're not very responsive to the market. We're a market-based solution."

The assertions are not without merit. Despite years of calls from the Internet community to make more TLDs available, ICANN approved just seven new domain names last year. And they did not include some of the names businesses and consumers were clamoring for, like dot-shop or dot-xxx. Instead, ICANN approved such relatively obscure-sounding TLDs as dot-aero and dot-coop.

A host of alternative domain naming systems, including the Atlantic and Pacific root networks, are currently in operation, but they require users to change their browser settings to first point to the alternate root server. This allows them to access Web sites on the ICANN-approved Net, but also creates the possibility of a server logjam or a single point of failure.

New.net is the first alternate TLD registry to convince big-league
Internet service providers, including Earthlink and Exite@home, to offer
their users automatic access to the alternative TLDs. The effect is that
Earthlink users, for example, can readily access the www.toys.shop site
while AOL or MSN users cannot.

New.net also has a deal with several software download sites to push free
software that will automatically allow browsers to recognize the new TLDs.

"Our ultimate goal is ubiquity; whether we achieve that by running this
parallel world or we get close enough so that ICANN says, 'Okay,' we don't
care," Chadima told NewsFactor.

ICANN so far declines to comment on New.net, the organization's spokesman,
Brett LaGrande, told NewsFactor.

But even though New.net has the greatest critical mass among the alternate
root systems -- more than 15 million users are able to access New.net
sites through their regular ISPs -- the renegade TLD registrars have been
stepping on each other's toes.

At least three companies presently offer domain names ending in dot-xxx to
adult content providers. Domain Name Systems, together with a group of
porn sites, operates a system that grants access to the dot-xxx and
dot-sex domains to people who have registered their credit cards in
advance.

Another rival, ICM Registry, has applied to ICANN to operate the official
dot-xxx registry, and New.net also has plans to operate a dot-xxx
registry.

The Net also hosts a bevy of ICANN-haters, operating Web sites like
Youcann.org and ICANNwatch.org. They are petitioning the U.S. Congress to
overhaul what they see as the non-profit's excessive powers, and are
insisting that ICANN make its decisions more democratic.

How the domain name game will eventually shake out is anyone's guess.
Congress is pondering ICANN's authority and has held hearings on the
recent deal extending VeriSign's control over the dot-com TLD until 2007.

Meanwhile, other countries, including China, have threatened to set up
their own competing domain naming organizations.

"Everyone outside the U.S. thinks ICANN is a complete puppet of the U.S.
government, and resents the U.S. thinking it can control the Internet,"
New.net's Chadima told NewsFactor.

Judge Lifts Ad Restraints On Juno

A federal judge on Thursday lifted a temporary restraining order barring
Juno Online Services from displaying advertisements on its free Internet
service, the company said.

The order clears the way for Juno to begin selling ad space on the service
pending resolution of a lawsuit filed in December by rival NetZero, in
which the ISP stands accused of patent infringement for displaying

advertising pop-up windows.

The case is one of a pair of lawsuits the competitors have filed over advertising technology. In June, Juno filed a lawsuit alleging that NetZero and Qualcomm infringed on a patent that enables advertisements and other content to be displayed when a consumer is offline.

Analysts said the cases highlight the growing use of patent law to challenge competitors' business strategies.

"I think one of the questions of patents and the Internet age is can you patent not just the technology, but a business model?" said Lydia Leong, analyst at Gartner. "This is the usual legal spin that occurs when companies with similar business models start fighting patent wars."

Like NetZero, Juno offers a paid and an unpaid ad-supported Internet service. It said advertising represented a minority of its revenue last year.

On Thursday, Juno said that U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson rejected NetZero's request for a preliminary injunction that would have broadened the existing temporary restraining order and extended its duration through the date of trial.

"We believe this was the right decision," said Juno Chief Executive Charles Ardai. "We don't believe that we were, or are, infringing any valid patent that NetZero holds. We thought it was inappropriate for our activities to be restrained in any way related to their claim, which we believe was untrue."

NetZero declined to comment.

Microsoft Uses Hated 'Clippy' to Pitch New Office

Users of Microsoft Corp.'s Office software are familiar with -- and annoyed by -- the animated paper clip ''helper" that interrupts tasks with blazingly obvious comments like, ''It looks like you're writing a letter."

Now the software leader is capitalizing on the feature's near-universal loathing to promote its upcoming version of the software, Office XP, which it claims is so easy to use that you won't need pesky cartoons to help you figure it out.

Office includes programs like the word processor Word, spreadsheet Excel and presentation software PowerPoint.

On Wednesday, Microsoft kicked off an online campaign that plays up the annoying personality of the paper clip -- known as "Clippy" -- with things like animated videos showing people cursing him while praising Office XP.

For months, Microsoft has touted new features in Office, but now it is hoping people will buy it for what is DOESN'T have -- namely Clippy, who will still lurk in the software but is turned off by default.

It is a rare public display of self-denigrating humor for a company that, like many big corporations, sometimes finds it hard to admit mistakes or

poke fun at itself.

''Most people either love Clippy or hate him, so we wanted to have to some fun with his reputation and show a sense of humor on the part of Microsoft," Office product manager Lisa Gurry said in an interview.

On a Web site at http:www.officeclippy.com, visitors can watch the animated videos, in which comedian Gilbert Gottfried, who made a career out of a grating on-stage personality, plays the voice of Clippy.

In one video, Clippy butts in on an office worker, who shouts, ''Next to Microsoft Bob you are the most annoying thing in computer history!" -- a reference to another ill-fated attempt by Microsoft to make computers easier to use.

Users can also check out Clippy's resume and a blues song. Later, Microsoft will introduce an online game in which users can blast Clippy with rubber bands or staples.

''Those people who are Clippy haters can vent that on the site," Gurry said.

Clippy, who made his debut more than four years ago with the January 1997 launch of Office 97, is actually based on complex algorithms developed by Microsoft's research arm to analyze natural language to infer what a user is doing and suggest ways to simplify the task.

But the incarnation of that technology as Clippy fell flat. The character became so hated that James Fallows, author and national correspondent for the Atlantic Monthly, said in a February 2000 article on Microsoft culture that the company made him sign a nondisclosure agreement not to reveal the name of Clippy's creator.

Microsoft is still employing natural language technology in the new Office, which boasts new features called ''smart tags" and "task panes" that can generate option menus on the fly depending on what a user is doing.

Those are ''different than Clippy but do offer intuitive options as you work," Gurry said. ''Those are two features that are going to make people's lives a lot easier."

Microsoft is hoping the new features will help put a spark back in Office sales. The software, along with the Windows operating system, is one of the two main pillars of Microsoft's business, but sales have stalled in recent quarters as customers haven't felt the need to upgrade.

Israeli Computer Mouse Helps the Blind to 'See'

An Israeli hi-tech company has produced a computer mouse that acts as the eyes of the blind and partially-sighted by helping them view computer graphics through touch.

Growing dependence on graphics and ''mice" to navigate screens in increasingly computer-based societies have limited the ability of the partially-sighted to use new technology.

Manufacturers tout the VirTouch system (VTS), which lets the blind ''see"

the delicate strokes of a sketch by the artist Pablo Picasso or the outline of countries on a map, as a "quantum leap" toward their integration into the world of the sighted.

''It breaks with the past by adding graphics to the universe of the blind person," said Art Braunstein, corporate relations director at VirTouch Ltd.

The company has integrated existing computer products for the blind and partially-sighted that are based on text-to-speech software and the Braille alphabet, with a device that acts both as a mouse and a tactile display.

VTS allows the blind to recognize graphic shapes, pictures, play tactile computer games and read text in normal letters or Braille by placing fingers on three pads that respond when a cursor on the computer screen touches a graphic or letter.

''The system is not only based on touch, but the user can listen to the representation with an audio device and see the image if they have sight. It's really the first multi-sensual device for the blind," said company founder Roman Gouzman.

Thirty-two pins on each pad move up in a black area, down in a white area and somewhere in the middle for gray zones.

The different heights enable the blind person to feel the curvature of lines and shading of computer graphics, or Braille symbols or standard alphabet letters when reading text.

Users can pretend to be racing drivers by steering a car along a winding road using the sense of the raised pins to keep to the right path, or practice archery by aiming for a bulls-eye target using the same technique.

''We sighted people use symbolic representation to be more efficient," Gouzman said.

''This special software teaches the blind to use the same symbols as we do to study geography, maths, biology, for example which was thought to be virtually impossible before," he said.

A Russian immigrant to Israel, Gouzman was inspired to develop the mouse after a skiing accident in the former Soviet Union left his daughter with permanent eye damage, and said he does not believe VTS faces a significant market competitor.

Gouzman and his partner Igor Karasin began work from their kitchen table on the four-year project to create the special mouse, using blind people to test the device as they went.

The VirTouch system, which hit the markets in September 2000 and retails for just under $5,000, has found a receptive audience with institutions in Israel and abroad.

Among those interested is Israel's Ministry of Education, which has bought 30 systems and agreed to study the introduction of the technology in schools throughout the country.

In January, VirTouch signed an agreement with a Dutch social venture fund to secure $1.25 million in equity financing and has signed up distributors in several European countries.

The VirTouch system may yet prove effective in giving the blind a collective voice as well as helping them to ''see."

''As the technology catches on and becomes more prominent, the blind are going to demand more Web sites giving them parallel graphic images of pictures," Braunstein predicted. ''It may even help advance legislation for the disabled as they demand the right to have the same technology as the sighted."

The Jerusalem-based company anticipates the estimated 20 million blind and partially sighted people in the Western world alone are part of an even larger potential market.

The audio component could help the dyslexic as they hear the text at the same time as they read, while the use of the palm and the motoric system to move and manipulate the mouse may assist those suffering motor coordination difficulties.

<center>Acquisitions Squeeze DSL</center>

Justin Beech is finally fed up. In an effort to get DSL access, Beech has endured a half-dozen visits from telephone technicians and repeat visits from employees of now-defunct NorthPoint Communications Inc. Add to that the burden of subscribing to three Internet providers and hooking up modems and other gear from several vendors.

For all his efforts, last week Beech - ironically the head of DSL.reports.com, a provider of advice on broadband connections for small business - ended up with nothing. His digital subscriber line connection, like most secured through NorthPoint, was cut off when the bankrupt company sold its equipment to AT&T Corp.

"I can't stand it anymore," Beech said, in New York.

Getting into the Internet via DSL-never a walk in the park-is poised to become an even greater struggle. Independent providers are losing ground to incumbent carriers, whose plans for-and commitment to-DSL remain unclear. What's worse, the poorer service is likely to be accompanied by higher prices as a result of decreased competition, industry insiders said.

AT&T, which purchased almost all of NorthPoint's infrastructure for just $135 million late last month, said that it will not assist the bankrupt company's stranded users. The telco won't soon be using the newfound gear-co-location cages with switches and DSL Access Multiplexers, for the most part-for business data services.

AT&T spokesman Mark Siegel said the company, for now, plans to use the equipment for local and long-distance voice services in addition to data.

Even if the incumbents do ultimately use their triumph over the independent DSL vendors to promote broadband access, prices are likely to rise.

"The rates charged were unsustainable for most everybody," said Roland Van der Meer, a partner with ComVentures, in Palo Alto, Calif., a venture

capital company that invests in communications companies. "On the consumer side, from an ILEC [incumbent local exchange carrier] you will see rates go in the $50 to $60 [per month] range. The cost of marketing has slowed down because they don't have to compete as much. People are going to call the phone company first more often. Business DSL is going to change dramatically."

For Beech, relying on a carrier for DSL does not inspire confidence. "I have Verizon [Communications Inc.] due to visit between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Monday to check wires [and so on]," he said. "When I consider their visit, I am reduced to a quivering mess."

While AT&T contemplates the best approach to absorbing its new gear, former NorthPoint customers are scrambling to find alternatives. California customers won the support of the state's public utility commission, which ruled last week that NorthPoint must continue offering service, but the company said that there is little it can do.

"Our response is that we are not actively taking down those services," said Manuella McCall, one of the few NorthPoint vice presidents remaining after the company let go of 700 employees following the deal with AT&T. "Our transport vendors are withdrawing their services. We have no funds to pay for them. We're not in any way thumbing our nose at the order."

In theory, NorthPoint's loss should be its rivals' gain, but other independent DSL providers such as Rhythms NetConnections Inc. and Covad Communications Inc. are struggling with their own teetering stock prices and financial constraints as they try to recruit stranded NorthPoint users. Many industry observers see little reason to believe the rivals can escape NorthPoint's fate.

The struggling independents said much of the blame for their difficulties falls to federal regulators, who have not provided sufficient incentives for ILECs to cooperate with their rivals.

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell rejects the argument that regulators are to blame for the DSL providers' woes.

"The government does what it can to provide entry, but it cannot guarantee a business model," Powell said. "As harsh as it sounds, markets don't just reward, but they also correct and punish inefficient activity. Some of the companies that did the right things are being punished anyway."

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